Listing of the Claims

1 - 41. (Cancelled)

42. (Currently amended) ~~Isolated~~ An isolated *E. coli* lacking endogenous plasmids and having a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of at least one microorganism selected from the group consisting of *E. coli* MM294, DH5α and DH10B.

43. (Previously presented)   The isolated *E. coli* of claim 42, wherein said isolated *E. coli* are *E. coli* strain W or strain C.

44. (Cancelled)

45. (Previously presented)   The isolated *E. coli* of claim 42, wherein said isolated *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

46. (Previously presented)   The isolated *E. coli* of claim 42, wherein said isolated *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* DH5α.

47. (Previously presented)   The isolated *E. coli* of claim 42, wherein said isolated *E. coli* have a growth rate that is 5 to 200% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

48. (Previously presented)   A method of cloning, comprising:

    (a)   obtaining competent *E. coli*;

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(b)   transforming said competent *E. coli* with at least one vector;

(c)   selecting transformed *E. coli* containing said at least one vector; and

(d)   culturing said transformed *E. coli*;

wherein said *E. coli* are *E. coli* having a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than

the growth rate of at least one microorganism selected from the group consisting of *E. coli*

MM294, DH5α and DH10B.

49. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 48, wherein said *E. coli* are *E. coli* strain W or strain C.

50. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 49, wherein said *E. coli* do not contain endogenous plasmids.

51. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 48, further comprising the step of isolating said vector from said transformed *E. coli*.

52. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 48, wherein the temperature at which said transformed *E. coli* are cultured is greater than 37°C.

53. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 52, wherein the temperature at which said transformed *E. coli* are cultured is about 42°C.

54. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 48, wherein the temperature at which said transformed *E. coli* are cultured is about 42°C.

55. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 48, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

56. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 48, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* DH5α.

57. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 48, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is 5 to 200% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

58. (Previously presented)   A method of producing a protein or peptide, comprising:

    (a)   obtaining competent *E. coli*;

    (b)   transforming into said competent *E. coli* a vector containing a gene encoding a protein or peptide; and

    (c)   culturing said transformed *E. coli* under conditions that cause said transformed *E. coli* to produce said protein or peptide;

wherein said *E. coli* are *E. coli* having a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of at least one microorganism selected from the group consisting of *E. coli* MM294, DH5α and DH10B.

59. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 58, wherein said *E. coli* are *E. coli* strain W or strain C.

60. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 59, wherein said *E. coli* do not contain endogenous plasmids.

61. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 58, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

62. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 58, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* DH5α.

63. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 58, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is 5 to 200% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

64. (Previously presented)   A method of producing *E. coli* for cloning, comprising:

   (a)   obtaining *E. coli* having endogenous plasmids and having a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of at least one microorganism selected from the group consisting of *E. coli* MM294, DH5α and DH10B; and

   (b)   curing said *E. coli* of endogenous plasmids.

65. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 64, wherein said *E. coli* are *E. coli* strain W or strain C.

66. (Previously presented)   The method according to claim 64, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

67. (Previously presented)   The method according to claim 64, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* DH5α.

68. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 64, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is 5 to 200% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

69. (Previously presented)   A method of transforming *E. coli*, comprising:

  (a)   obtaining competent *E. coli*;

  (b)   incubating said *E. coli* in the presence of one or more vectors under conditions which cause said one or more vectors to be taken up by said *E. coli*; and

  (c)   culturing said *E. coli*;

wherein said *E. coli* are *E. coli* having a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of at least one microorganism selected from the group consisting of *E. coli* MM294, DH5α and DH10B.

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70. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 69, wherein said *E. coli* are *E. coli* strain W or strain C.

71. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 70, wherein said *E. coli* do not contain endogenous plasmids.

72. (Previously presented)   The method according to claim 69, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

73. (Previously presented)   The method according to claim 69, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* DH5α.

74. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 69, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is 5 to 200% greater than the growth rate of MM294.

75. (Previously presented)   A kit for cloning comprising a container containing *E. coli* lacking endogenous plasmids and having a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of at least one microorganism selected from the group consisting of *E. coli* MM294, DH5α and DH10B.

76. (Previously presented)   The kit of claim 75, further comprising one or more vectors.

77. (Previously presented)   The kit of claim 76, further comprising at least one component selected from the group consisting of one or more restriction enzymes, one or more ligase enzymes, and one or more polymerases.

78. (Previously presented)   The kit of claim 77, further comprising a container containing a recombination protein.

79. (Previously presented)   The kit of claim 75, wherein said *E. coli* are competent.

80. (Previously presented)   The kit of claim 79, wherein said *E. coli* are chemically competent.

81. (Previously presented)   The kit of claim 79, wherein said *E. coli* are electrocompetent.

82. (Previously presented) The kit of claim 75, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

83. (Previously presented)   The kit of claim 75, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* DH5α.

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84. (Previously presented)   The kit of claim 75, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is 5 to 200% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

85. (Previously presented)   A composition comprising *E. coli*, wherein said *E. coli* lack endogenous plasmids and have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of at least one microorganism selected from the group consisting of *E. coli* MM294, DH5α and DH10B.

86. (Previously presented)   The composition of claim 85, further comprising a component selected from the group consisting of a glycerol solution and a competence buffer.

87. (Previously presented)   The composition of claim 85, further comprising at least one component selected from the group consisting of one or more DNA fragments, one or more ligase enzymes, one or more vectors, one or more buffering salts, and one or more recombination proteins.

88. (Previously presented)   The composition of claim 85, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

89. (Previously presented) The composition of claim 85, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* DH5α.

90. (Previously presented)   The composition of claim 85, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is 5 to 200% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

91. (Previously presented)   A method of making competent *E. coli,* comprising:

    (a)   obtaining *E. coli* having a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of at least one microorganism selected from the group consisting of *E. coli* MM294, DH5α and DH10B; and

    (b)   treating said *E. coli* to make it competent.

92. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 91, further comprising the step of curing said *E. coli* of endogenous plasmids.

93. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 91, wherein said *E. coli* are *E. coli* strain W or strain C.

94. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 91, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

95. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 91, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* DH5α.

96. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 91, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is 5 to 200% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

97. (Currently amended)   <u>An</u> *E. coli* having a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of at least one microorganism selected from the group consisting of *E. coli* MM294, DH5α and DH10B, wherein said *E. coli* has been made competent.

98 - 102. (Cancelled)

103. (Previously presented)   The isolated *E. coli* of claim 42, wherein said isolated *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 25% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

104. (Previously presented)   The isolated *E. coli* of claim 42, wherein said isolated *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 50% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

105. (Previously presented)   The isolated *E. coli* of claim 42, wherein said isolated *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 100% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

106. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 48, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 25% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

107. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 48, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 50% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

108. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 48, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 100% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

109. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 58, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 25% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

110. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 58, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 50% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

111. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 58, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 100% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

112. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 64, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 25% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

113. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 64, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 50% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

114. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 64, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 100% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

115. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 69, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 25% greater than the growth rate of MM294.

116. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 69, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 50% greater than the growth rate of MM294.

117. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 69, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 100% greater than the growth rate of MM294.

118. (Previously presented)   The kit of claim 75, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 25% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

119. (Previously presented)   The kit of claim 75, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 50% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

120. (Previously presented)   The kit of claim 75, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 100% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

121. (Previously presented)   The composition of claim 85, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 25% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

122. (Previously presented)   The composition of claim 85, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 50% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

123. (Previously presented)   The composition of claim 85, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 100% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

124. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 91, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 25% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

125. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 91, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 50% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

126. (Previously presented)   The method of claim 91, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 100% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

127 - 129. (Cancelled)

130. (Previously presented)   The *E. coli* of claim 97, wherein said *E. coli* are *E. coli* strain W or strain C.

131. (Previously presented)   The *E. coli* of claim 97, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

132. (Previously presented)   The *E. coli* of claim 97, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* DH5α.

133. (Previously presented)   The *E. coli* of claim 97, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is 5 to 200% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

134. (Previously presented)   The *E. coli* of claim 97, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 25% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

135. (Previously presented)   The *E. coli* of claim 97, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 50% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

136. (Previously presented)   The *E. coli* of claim 97, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 100% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

137. (Previously presented)   The *E. coli* of claim 97, wherein said *E. coli* are chemically competent.

138. (Previously presented)   The *E. coli* of claim 97, wherein said *E. coli* are electrocompetent.

139 - 144. (Cancelled)

145. (Previously presented)   An *E. coli* having deposit number NRRL B-30143 and derivatives thereof.

146. (Previously presented)   An *E. coli* having deposit number NRRL B-30144 and derivatives thereof.

147. (Currently amended)   <u>An</u> *E. coli* having a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of at least one microorganism selected from the group consisting of NRRL B-30143, <u>and</u> NRRL B-30144, ~~ATCC 9637, and ATCC 33625,~~ wherein said *E. coli* has been made competent.

148. (Cancelled)

149. (Cancelled)